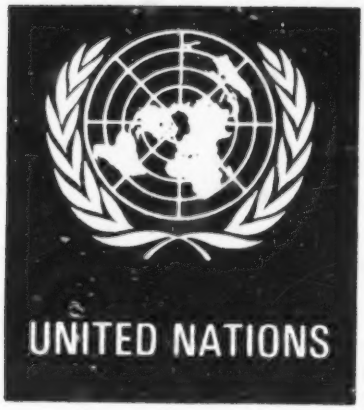

DIVISION FOR PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

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I. SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES REPORTS ON SITUATION

The fourteenth report of the Special Committee (A/54/325) was issued on 8 September 1999 and transmitted to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General. It followed two periodic reports (A/54/73 and Add.1), which were transmitted to the Assembly on 13 April and 7 September, respectively. In accordance with established practice, the consideration of these reports was allocated to the Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), together with related reports of the Secretary-General.

The reports under this item were summarized as follows in a press release issued at United Nations Headquarters (see GA/SPD/162):

The report states that restrictions in the occupied territories with respect to land, housing and water severely affect the Palestinians. The information made available to the Special Committee confirms that confiscation of Palestinian-owned land still continues. The establishment of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones continued and accelerated markedly after the signature of the Wye River Memorandum in 1998, particularly subsequent to the unilateral suspension by Israel for six months of its implementation of the Memorandum. There are reportedly 194 Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. Some Palestinian estimates placed the number of settlements at about 220.

Also according to the report, movement of Palestinians within and between parts of the occupied territories continues to be under the control of the Israeli authorities. Requirements concerning identity cards and travel permits are complicated, and there is a system of checkpoints and closures. Among the positive developments during the period under review was a decline in the number of Palestinian administrative detainees, which has been attributed to the activities by Israeli human rights groups. The issue of torture has been raised repeatedly in connection with the treatment of Palestinian prisoners under interrogation, in particular those accused of having committed security-related offences.

The Special Committee concludes that there exists an all-encompassing sense of tension in the occupied territories. Rigorous implementation of laws, regulations and administrative measures by Israeli authorities creates a sense of fear and despondency among the inhabitants. During periods of violence, such exercise of control makes the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in the occupied territories even more unbearable. Bitterness at their treatment by the authorities and the sense of hopelessness are caused to a large extent by lack of progress in the peace process and absence of tangible benefits for the people of the occupied territories. The Special Committee welcomes the resumption of dialogue in the peace process and notes meetings between Palestinians and Israelis of the younger generation, which show what appears to be an increasing willingness to meet and communicate. However, the Committee also observes an apparent absence of sensitivity to circumstances in the occupied territories on the part of the Israeli authorities. As regards the general conditions of the Palestinians, the sense of alienation, exclusion and separation from their homeland remains a matter of anxiety and concern.

The Special Committee recommends that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in communication with the Secretary-General, consult with appropriate

Israeli authorities with respect to permitting long-separated families in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the Syrian Golan to meet freely and often. Such consultations should also include the subjects of the entire process of detention and treatment of detainees; the use of physical force and torture; the effect of the occupation, including settlements, closures and restriction on movement, on the children of the occupied territories; facilitating access to educational centres; and ameliorating the conditions under which Palestinians in Gaza travel from Gaza into Israel through the Erez border crossing.

The Special Committee considers it especially important that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with the Secretary-General, establish a system of continuous communication with the Israeli authorities to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples of the occupied territories. The Special Committee also believes that it is important for the Committee to have access to the occupied territories in order to witness for itself the actual human rights situation there and to ascertain the views of the Israeli Government on the subject.

The Committee also had before it the Special Committee's first periodic report (A/54/73), which covers the period from 6 November to 31 January 1999 and contains a summary of articles on the matters within the terms of reference of the Special Committee from the newspapers *Ha'aretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*, published in Israel, and *The Jerusalem Times*, published in the occupied territories.

According to the summarized articles on the human rights situation in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the part of the area fully controlled by the Palestinian Authority (Area A) would increase from 3 to 18.2 per cent and Israel would withdraw from 13 per cent of Area C. As a result, the Palestinians would have full or partial control over 40 per cent of the West Bank, while Israelis would control the remaining 60 per cent. The document also contains reports of incidents when Palestinian residents of the occupied territories objected to Israeli settlement practices and land development there, and of settlers seizing Palestinian land and establishing makeshift operations in several locations in the West Bank.

The report also contains articles about land confiscation in the occupied territories and violent confrontations over the construction of settlements, the plans for which - according to the articles - have been accelerated before the implementation of the Wye agreement. The Wye Memorandum states that "neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza strip in accordance with the Interim Agreement", the report stated. However, then Prime Minister Netanyahu stated on 31 October 1998 that by the year 2000, construction would be completed at Har Homa. On 15 November, members of the Council of Jewish Settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stated that they would continue to establish facts on the ground in advance of a pullback. Construction of roads also continued in the occupied territories.

The Special Committee also transmits summaries from articles regarding the confiscation and demolition of houses built without permits, and restrictions affecting the movement of Palestinians within and outside the occupied territories. Following violent incidents, the Israeli authorities on numerous occasions resorted to closures of Palestinian villages, imposing curfews and setting up roadblocks throughout the West Bank to prevent residents from leaving their homes. Some publications contain information about delays and difficulties in granting authorizations and identification papers to the Palestinians by the Israeli authorities; incidents at checkpoints; interrogation procedures; administrative detention and imprisonment and in their conditions.

On the question of the use of force, the report transmits summarized articles about clashes between the Palestinian protesters and Israeli troops, as well as about use of rubber bullets, tear gas and live ammunition by the authorities. Violent incidents in many cases led

to injuries and death on both sides. Aspects of the administration of justice are also covered, as well as economic, social and cultural effects of the Israeli system of regulation and enforcement.

The last chapter of the report is devoted to the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, where, the report stated, settlement policies, similar to those in other occupied territories, were pursued. On 4 January 1999, the Knesset plenum approved the first reading of a bill that would require any Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights to be approved by an absolute majority of 61 members of the Knesset and a simple majority of citizens voting in a national referendum. On 26 January, the Knesset gave its final approval to the so-called Golan Heights bill. However, due to a change in the bill approved by the Knesset, the requirement for holding a referendum would only take effect after the Knesset legislated a basic law on the matter.

The Committee also had before it the second periodic report of the Special Committee (A/54/73/Add.1), which covers the period from February through August 1999. The newest evidence before the Committee, the report states, includes examples of Israeli practices relating to land, housing, use of water, demonstrations in protest of Israeli actions, road construction, identity cards and travel permits.

It is reported that the Israeli Interior Ministry would defend its policy of revoking East Jerusalem identity cards by introducing a new plan. The Israeli authorities would conduct a census within Jerusalem city limits before the end of 1999. According to the proposal, the citizens of East Jerusalem would be divided into five categories. Those living within the borders of the city and included in the 1968 census would have permanent status and would enjoy full social benefits. Other categories would have no entitlement to social benefits; depending on their place of residence, they would be given different kinds of residence status and identification papers. The report also contains information on the closures and the manner of the implementation of restrictions. It also addresses the question of the use of force; aspects of the administration of justice; and economic, social and cultural effects that the Israeli system of regulation and enforcement has on the lives of the people of the occupied territories.

The Committee also had before it reports of the Secretary-General regarding his actions undertaken pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 53/53, 53/54, 53/55, 53/56 and 53/57 of 3 December 1998 (documents A/54/181, A/54/182, A/54/183, A/54/184 and A/54/185). In those reports, the Secretary-General states, among other things, that all necessary facilities were provided to the Special Committee on Israeli practices, and the Department of Public Information continued to provide press coverage of the Special Committee meetings. The Department also continued to disseminate information on the activities of the Special Committee and provide support to its field missions. The Secretary-General also states that in view of his reporting responsibilities under the resolutions, he addressed several notes verbales requesting information on steps taken by the Israeli Government concerning the implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions. No replies had been received at the time of the preparation of the reports. The Secretary-General had drawn the attention of all States Parties to the Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and to relevant paragraphs of the Assembly resolutions.

II. DONORS AND HOST GOVERNMENTS REITERATE SUPPORT FOR UNRWA: ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF OVER $7 MILLION ANNOUNCED

Below is text of press release issued by UNRWA on 30 September 1999 (see PAL/1870):

Donors to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and Governments hosting Palestine refugees in the Near East, at an informal meeting which ended Wednesday in Amman, have reaffirmed support for UNRWA and its efforts to maintain services to some 3.6 million refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In response to the Agency's current financial crisis, delegates from a number of donor countries also announced additional contributions to UNRWA's 1999 budget.

The additional contributions announced included, from the United States, $1 million to the Agency's "general fund" regular budget and another $2.5 million for special projects; around $2.1 million for the general fund from the Netherlands, some $1.6 million for the general fund from the United Kingdom, and around $800,000 each from Italy and Canada. The Government of France announced that part of its food aid to UNRWA for 1999 would be monetized through a payment to UNRWA of some $950,000 in cash, in lieu of transportation and distribution costs, for a donation of 1,500 tonnes of flour.

The representative of Belgium announced that his Government would increase its annual contribution to UNRWA by 10 per cent in 2000, in addition to increasing food aid to the Agency. Luxembourg said its contribution to UNRWA's general fund and projects in 2000 would be increased by 25 per cent over their 1999 level. The additional contributions announced at the Amman meeting will cover part of the Agency's expected cash deficit in 1999.

The Amman meeting was attended by delegates from 26 of UNRWA's major donors, the host Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Speaking on behalf of Jordan's Prime Minister, the Director-General of the Jordanian Department of Palestinian Affairs, Abdul Kareem Abul Heija, reiterated Jordan's commitment to supporting Palestine refugees and offering them the means for socio-economic development. "UNRWA's indispensable services are viewed by the refugees themselves and the host Governments as a bastion of stability and a vital instrument in helping the refugees cope with the necessities of life, until a final settlement of their problem is reached and implemented", he said.

In his opening remarks, UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen said that despite the continuation of existing austerity and cost-reduction measures in 1999, the financial situation for the year remained grave, with a cash-flow crisis expected in the last quarter of 1999.

Meeting with Mr. Hansen in Amman on Wednesday, Jordan's Prime Minister, Abdur Ra'uf Rawabdeh, reaffirmed Jordan's unwavering support to UNRWA and its firm belief that the continuation of UNRWA services was instrumental to peace and stability in the region. He expressed his hope that donor countries would increase their support to UNRWA at this critical juncture in the peace process.

At the Amman meeting, delegates from donor and host Governments stressed their full support for UNRWA and its continuing efforts to improve the level and quality of services under extreme financial difficulties. They also commended the Agency for its continuing efforts for management reform, which had resulted in a new budget format providing an

improved tool for planning and fund-raising. Delegates also reiterated their belief that a solution to the refugee problem was a prerequisite for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

In his concluding remarks, Commissioner-General Hansen thanked donor and host Governments for their continued support for the Agency and for the additional pledges announced at the meeting. He reiterated the Agency's commitment to a "tripartite" partnership with its stakeholders, the donor Governments, the host authorities and the refugees.

III. UN SPECIAL COORDINATOR ISSUES STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN ECONOMY

Below is text of a press release issued by the Office of the Special Coordinator on 18 October 1999 (see PAL/1871):

Recent progress on the peace front is reinforcing improvements in the Palestinian economy, donors were told by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Terje-Rod Larsen.

Mr. Larsen's statement was issued prior to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting in Tokyo today, which is being chaired by the Foreign Ministers of Japan and Norway, and is composed of the Palestinian Authority, Israel, major donors including the United States, the European Union, Japan, Norway and Canada, as well as the Russian Federation and regional parties such as Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Larsen declared that, for the first time since early 1996, there was encouraging news in both the political and the economic aspects of the peace process. On the one hand, the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement and its implementation "are allowing people to believe once again that a comprehensive and lasting peace will be achieved". On the other hand, the Palestinian economy is growing at about 4 per cent and employment opportunities are increasing.

Mr. Larsen commented that the Palestinian Authority had been "very successful" in establishing the basic institutions of the public sector, delivering public services and initiating a planning process to identify priorities for development assistance. Today's Liaison Committee agenda also indicated how successful the parties had been in resolving differences, including some related to increasing Palestinian access to external markets. Furthermore, it reflected the responsiveness of donors to charging developments in the peace process and in the Palestinian economy.

Unfortunately, Mr. Larsen continued, the news was far from being all good: "The Palestinian economy remains perched on a weak foundation that is still under construction." The increase in jobs could be attributed to two factors: Israeli demand for Palestinian labour and employment in the public sector. "In the longer run, neither of these trends is a viable long-term engine for economic growth."

What is needed, said Mr. Larsen, is large-scale private investment. To achieve this, there is a need to overcome the political and economic uncertainties, combined with the lack of basic infrastructure and developed governance structures. Bolstering investor confidence was, therefore, a principal goal.

Mr. Larsen said that the donor community, as represented in the Liaison Committee, was in a position to play a continuing positive role in the future. He proposed that, over the next 12 months, the Liaison Committee should focus its attention on three areas: increasing public investment by both donors and the Palestinian Authority; enhancing Palestinian access to

international markets for trade and investment purposes and regional markets for increasing job opportunities; and supporting the Palestinian Authority's efforts to further improve governance structures and public resource management. "Public investment is the bricks, while market access and governance are the mortar; both are needed to construct the edifice which we all want to see, a strong and sustainable Palestinian economy", he said.

Commenting on the declining level of disbursements (under $250 million for the whole of 1999 to date), Mr. Larsen reminded donors that annual disbursements should be running at $600 million if they were to keep their November 1998 promise to the Palestinian people to provide around $3 billion in aid over the coming five years.